

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 HEW-02

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R 291648Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4089

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USEC BRUSSELS 1878

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 9052

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, SP

SUBJECT: STRIKES AND LABOR UNREST

REF (A) MADRID 8569; (B) MADRID 8681

BEGIN SUMMARY. PAST 2 1/2 WEEKS WITNESSED SIGNIFICANT STRIKE ACTIVITY, WHICH COMMENCED IN RESPONSE TO APPEALS FOR GENERAL STRIKES AMONG MADRID CONSTRUCTION AND METAL WORKERS DEC 10-12 (REF B) AND CONTINUED THRU DEC 24. STRIKES AND LABOR AGITATION LIKELY TO RESUME WITH RENEWED FORCE IN JANUARY. END SUMMARY.

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1. ALTHOUGH CONSTRUCTION GENERAL STRIKE APPEAL MET WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE SUCCESS, MANY STRIKES DID OCCUR IN METAL SECTOR PARTICULARLY IN MADRID. STRIKES IN MADRID, OFTEN FOLLOWED BY POLICE EVICTIONS OF STRIKERS, OCCURRED, INTER ALIA, AT 19,000-WORKER STANDARD ELECTRICAL-ITT FACTORY, AT 11,500-WORKER CHRYSLER AUTOMOBILE PLANT, AT 4,000-WORKER CASA AIRCRAFT PLANT (WHERE USAF F-4 PHANTOMS ARE OVERHAULED), AND AT JOHN DEERE, SIEMENS, AND KELVINATOR FACTORIES. DURING DEC 10-19, PEAK PERIOD THERE WERE AN AVERAGE OF 30-40,000 MADRID METAL WORKERS ON STRIKE. IN SOME PLANTS STRIKES ENDED AFTER INITIAL ACTIVITY (E.G., AT CHRYSLER WHERE WORKERS STRUCK FOR THREE SUCCESSIVE DAYS BUT THEN RETURNED TO WORK), AND IN OTHERS STRIKE ACTIVITY HAS CONTINUED TO DATE (E.G. STANDARD ELECTRIC-ITT WHERE 13,000 WORKERS ARE NOW IN THEIR TWENTIETH DAY OF A STRIKE).

2. CERTAIN OTHER CATEGORIES OF WORKERS ALSO COMMENCED STRIKES RELATED TO THEIR OWN PROBLEMS, SUCH AS BANK WORKERS, WHO HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN CONTINUING STRIKE ACTIVITY OF ONE AND TWO HOURS DURATION AT SOME OF MOST IMPORTANT MADRID AND BARCELONA BANKS. DAYS PRIOR TO XMAS ALSO WITNESSED UNUSUAL NEAR-TOTAL STRIKES OF TAXI-DRIVERS IN MADRID AND BARCELONA OVER DEMANDS FOR INCREASED FARES. GOVT'S CONCERN AT DISRUPTION CAUSED BY TAXI STRIKE WAS DEMONSTRATED BY PROMPT INTERVENTION OF NEWLY APPOINTED SYNDICAL MINISTER MARTIN VILLA, WHO PROMISED TO IMMEDIATELY LOOK INTO TAXI DRIVERS DEMANDS WHILE AUTHORITIES MEANWHILE TEMPORARILY APPROVED A FARE INCREASE PENDING RESOLUTION OF PROBLEM, WHICH MEASURES ENDED STRIKE.

3. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN SOME SCATTERED STRIKE ACTIVITY ELSEWHERE, INCLUDING AMONG EVER-VOLATILE COAL MINERS IN ASTURIAS, AND IN FACTORIES AND SHIPYARDS IN VALLADOLID, VIGO, EL FERROL, LA CORUNA, SEVILLE, CORDOBA, MALAGA, CADIZ, AND HUELVA. AT TWO DISTINCT GEOGRAPHIC POINTS, I.E. IN SEVILLE AND BILBAO, SMALL GROUPS OF WORKERS INVOLVED IN LOCAL STRIKES EVEN LOCKED THEMSELVES IN TWO CHURCHES ON XMAS EVE AND BEGAN TO STAGE HUNGER

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STRIKES TO DRAMATIZE THEIR LABOR DEMANDS, WHICH CHURCH SIT-INS ARE NOW IN THEIR SIXTH DAY. ADDITIONALLY, IN SANTANDER PROVINCE, 1,700 UNEMPLOYED AUTOMOBILE WORKERS STAGED A 20-MILE DEC 23 PROTEST MARCH IN FREEZING WEATHER.

4. ALTHOUGH ORIGINAL APPEAL FOR DEC 10-12 GENERAL STRIKE ATTEMPTS WERE ISSUED BY COMMUNIST-DOMINATED WORKERS COMMISSIONS, MOST OTHER LABOR-OPPOSITION GROUPS ALSO

SUBSEQUENTLY JOINED IN. PARTICULARLY ACTIVE WAS A MAOIST CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUP WHICH HAS RECENTLY BEEN GAINING SUBSTANTIAL PROMINENCE, E.E. THE PARTIDO DEL TRABAJO (PDT), A GROUP WHICH UNTIL SIX MONTHS AGO WAS KNOWN AS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) AND WHICH NOW COOPERATES WITH SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCE) IN BOTH WORKERS COMMISSIONS AND IN "JUNTA DEMOCRATICA."

5. COMMENT: EFFORTS BY WORKERS COMMISSIONS AND OTHERS TO PROMOTE LONG-STANDING PCE GOAL OF POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED SECTOR GENERAL STRIKES CAN BE CONSIDERED RELATIVE FAILURE. STRIKES DID PROVE SUCCESSFUL, HOWEVER, IN A NUMBER OF HIGHLY IMPORTANT FACTORIES. ALTHOUGH STRIKE APPEALS CONTAINED MIXTURE OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEMANDS, IT APPEARS STRIKES OCCURRED ONLY WHERE THERE ALREADY EXISTED ECONOMIC OR LABOR-RELATED PROBLEMS, CHIEFLY THOSE WHERE NEW COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONTRACTS ARE BEING NEGOTIATED. ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF RECENT STRIKE SCENE, HAS BEEN FACT POLICE, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE FREQUENTLY INTERVENED, HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY MORE RESTRAINED THAN IN PAST, AS THEY ARE REPORTEDLY UNDER INSTRUCTIONS OF NEW INTERIOR MINISTER GRAFA TO USE MINIMUM FORCE.

6. AS OF XMAS, RECENT STRIKE ACTIVITY TAPERED OFF SUBSTANTIALLY AND IT IS LIKELY TO REMAIN AT A LOWER LEVEL THROUGH END OF HOLIDAY PERIOD. LABOR AGITATION AND STRIKE ACTIVITY, HOWEVER, ARE EXPECTED TO PICK UP WITH RENEWED INTENSITY FOLLOWING JANUARY 6. WORKERS COMMISSIONS ARE REPORTEDLY WORKING ON EVEN BROADER EFFORTS TO CONVOKE GENERAL STRIKES BETWEEN MID-JANUARY AND MID-FEBRUARY. THUS OUTLOOK IS FOR EVEN GREATER DEGREE OF STRIKE ACTIVITY AND LABOR AGITATION DURING NEXT FEW MONTHS. IT POSSIBLE, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, NEW GOVT MIGHT ADOPT MEASURES WHICH COULD HAVE EFFECT OF CALMING DOWN LABOR CLIMATE, SUCH AS (A) COMPULSORY ARBITRATION SETTLEMENTS OF MOST CURRENT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH AWARDS SUBSTANTIALLY FAVORING WORKERS ECONOMIC DEMANDS; (B) MODIFICATION OF GOVT'S CURRENT WAGE INCREASE CEILINGS; AND (C) STEPS TO COMMENCE REFORM OF GOVT-CONTROLLED SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION (SUBJECT OF SEPTTEL). EATON

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